

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000400

SIPDIS

STATE FOR CA/EX, CA/VO, CA/PPT, EUR/WE, CA/FPP, TSAX  
ROME FOR DHS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OREP](#) [CMGT](#) [CVIS](#) [CPAS](#) [KFRD](#) [AMGT](#) [AORC](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL Sensenbrenner

REF: (A) State 003694, other

1. SUMMARY: Congressman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Mrs. Sensenbrenner and Chief of Staff Phil Kiko visited France from January 9 to 17 to conduct a review of French actions to enhance the security of their passports, cooperate with the U.S. in combating terrorism and secure their borders and shipping against those who would perpetrate acts of terrorism. The visit included a number of opportunities for open exchanges with senior officials at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior. In addition the group visited the ports at Le Havre and Strasbourg, and held very informative meetings regarding biometric passports, with both the Belgian Embassy and a private French contractor, Thales. The visit concluded Monday, January 17, 2005 with a comprehensive tour of the security operations at Charles de Gaulle Airport. End summary.

2. The stated objectives for the visit included discussions regarding three key areas: Franco-American cooperation in the fight against terrorism, protection of US borders overseas, and biometric documentation. At each meeting Chairman Sensenbrenner shared his positive opinion of French cooperation on all judicial and law enforcement levels. He remained firm in his demands that the French government needs to comply with the requirement for biometric passports. The border controls at the port of Le Havre and at the airport appeared to meet his approval; the inland port at Strasbourg did not appear to him to be at the same standard, although he was in general positive about Franco-German border cooperation.

3. Chairman Sensenbrenner has a comprehensive knowledge of all the legislation concerning these areas, and was able to answer the questions posed to him by various parties, based on his authorship of both the USA PATRIOT Act (H.R. 3162) Patriot Act and the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act (H.R. 3525) Visas and Borders Bill of 2003. This latter bill requires the implementation of biometric passports for all Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries (both France and Belgium are a part) prior to October 24, 2005. The Belgium Director General of Consular Affairs, Mr. Rudi Veestraeten, who traveled to Paris just to meet with the visitors, demonstrated their new biometric passport to great approval. France repeatedly stated that because of technical requirements and delays in the development of Schengen Group standards, they would be unable to meet the deadline.

4. Although the Chairman agreed that the USG is currently behind schedule, there are no biometric passport readers at ports of entry, and that a postponement of the next deadline is possible, he hardened his position somewhat when the outside contractor, Thales, indicated that the French have not yet requested bids on their biometric passports. This change in the Congressman's attitude came after he learned that Belgium is not only ahead of the deadline by almost a year, but is purchasing their biometric passports from a French company. Chairman Sensenbrenner repeatedly stated that he believes that deadlines motivate people. He was equally consistent in asserting that the Department of State was slow to inform the VWP countries of the requirements to have the biometric passport to remain eligible for the VWP.

5. At the Port of Le Havre Chairman Sensenbrenner was given a thorough tour, and had an opportunity to see the Container Security Initiative (CSI) program in operation. That program, and the French operation of the port, satisfied many of his concerns regarding US border security with respect to cargo shipments.

6. During his visit to Paris there were two incidents reported of passengers traveling to the US who were on the No-Fly list. He asked numerous questions about this, followed the progress of each case, and was able to witness the successful operation of the system.

7. COMMENT: After an absence from France of many years, Chairman Sensenbrenner will be back for his third visit in three months. His stated objective is to keep pressure on the French to meet the biometric passport deadline required in the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act (H.R. 3525) Visa and Border Act. He plans to communicate his

concern about French inaction directly to their Ambassador in Washington. It is probable that he will also express his disappointment with the Department of State for its inability to more quickly deploy our own biometric passports. He repeatedly expressed his opinion that the efforts of the Department of State to inform the VWP countries about the provisions of the Borders and Visa bill were inadequate and tardy. End comment.

Wolff